

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Wissota Tool

Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center

Wissota Tool is Thriving on Lean Ideas

Client Profile:

Wissota Tool manufactures dies used in the beverage and aerosol can industry. Twenty percent of the company's business includes rebuilding equipment used in producing the cans. Located in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, Wissota Tool has 50 employees.

Situation:

After Wissota Tool attended a lean seminar hosted by the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center (NWMOC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, the company's management team knew lean could be applied at the plant. Realizing they needed help deciding what options would work and how to implement these opportunities, Wissota Tool turned to NWMOC for assistance.

Solution:

NWMOC walked through the plant to assess its current operations, and then met with the Wissota Tool management team to discuss what would work and what wouldn't. After discussing several options, the team decided to conduct a value stream map and implement cellular manufacturing to improve productivity.

Twenty-five key people from Wissota Tool attended a NWMOC Lean 101 seminar as step one of the implementation plan. From the initial 25 people, Wissota Tool chose a select group to begin the value stream mapping process. With assistance from NWMOC, the team was able to document the current state of its manufacturing processes and significantly reduce its non-value-added activities.

Two of the issues identified for improvement in the value stream map were set-up time and cellular flow. The team created a roadmap to improvement, and then turned its attention to the cellular flow project. With NWMOC assistance, the team soon decided what machines to put in the cell, how to lay them out, where to put the supermarkets, and how much inventory to carry. Once the decision was made, Wissota Tool shut down the plant and moved most of the equipment to its new configuration in just two days. The vital pieces were up and running within an hour or two of being moved. The changes have greatly reduced lead time, and Wissota Tool is now able to quickly turn around rush orders and other "emergencies."

Results:

Reduced work-in-process by 20 percent.

Increased sales by 10 percent.

Reduced lead time by 60 days.

Increased available floor space by 2,209 square feet.

Testimonial:

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"The assistance from the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center has done a lot of things for us. It helped us reduce inventory--eliminating work-in-process of items now run in the cell. In hindsight, I can honestly say that it has changed some of our focus and it works great. Without it, we wouldn't have been close to meeting some of our corporate goals."

LaMoine Dohms, Machine Shop Manager